

IN RESPONSE TO THE OFFICE ACTION:

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner indicates that claims 1–6, 8–14, and 16–19 are allowable. The Examiner also indicates that dependent claim 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant appreciates the Examiner’s acknowledgement of allowable subject matter.

REMARKS REGARDING AMENDMENTS

Claim 21, which depended from independent claims 20, has been cancelled and independent claim 20 has been amended to incorporate the limitations previously required by claim 21. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner indicate allowance of independent claim 20 and each claim that depends on claim 20. Support for the above amendments can be found at least in the original specification, claims, and drawing as no new matter has been added. Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 20, as amended, is clearly distinct and patentable over the prior art of record as recognized by the Examiner and therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner enter these requested amendments and that all claims be allowed.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(e):

Claims 20 and 22, 23, 24, and 31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,974,373 to Kriesel (“Kriesel”). Applicant requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the above rejections in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

As noted above, cancelled claim 21 was deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form. Independent claim 20 was amended to incorporate the limitations of cancelled claim 21

thus, rendering the above rejection moot. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the § 102(e) rejection of independent claim 20.

Claims 22–24 and 31 depend from claim 20 and thus, incorporate each limitation therein. Therefore, claims 22–24 and 31 are allowable for at least the same reason as independent claim 20. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner also reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 22–24 and 31.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a):

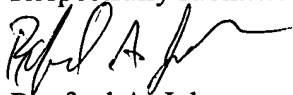
Claims 25–28, 30, 32, and 33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Kriesel. Applicant requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the above rejections in view of the following remarks.

As noted above, independent claim 20 was amended to incorporate the limitations of cancelled claim 21. Claims 25–28, 30, 32, and 33 depend from claim 20 and thus, incorporate each limitation therein. Therefore, claims 25–28, 30, 32, and 33 are allowable for at least the same reason as independent claim 20. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner also reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 25–28, 30, 32, and 33.

For at least the reasons presented above, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner indicate the allowance of claims 1–6, 8–14, 16–20, 22–28, and 30–33 in the next paper from the Office. Applicant invites the Examiner to contact the undersigned attorney by telephone to discuss any issues or questions presented by this paper.

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Applicant: John Conan Doyle II
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Respectfully submitted,



Rexford A. Johnson

Patent Attorney

Reg. No. 57,664

Tel. (713) 787-1697

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